

TOWN OF LEISENRING  
H.C. Frick Coke Company  
Leisenring  
Fayette  
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-298

HAER  
PA  
26-LEIS,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

**TOWN OF LEISENRING**  
H.C. Frick Coke Company

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Location: Either side of SR 1039 at intersection with  
SR 1051, Leisenring, Dunbar Twp.,  
Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: 1880, 1899, 1917, 1918

Builder: unknown

Present Owner: private ownership, residents

Present Use: residential

Significance: Typical southwestern Pennsylvania company  
town built to house miners and coke workers.  
Company store is one unique and is one of the  
best preserved of its type in the region.

Project Information: In February, 1987, the Historic American  
Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic  
American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a  
multi-year historical and architectural  
documentation project in southwestern  
Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction  
with America's Industrial Heritage Project  
(AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive  
inventory of Fayette County to identify the  
region's surviving historic engineering works  
and industrial resources.

Compiler: Kenneth Rose and Gray Fitzsimons

## History

The town of Leisenring, immediately north of where the mine complex and coke ovens once stood, is comprised of nearly 100 houses, most of which are semi-detached two-family homes with gable ends, situated on a hillside along seven streets with alleys between. The bulk of Leisenring No. 1 is east of SR 1039; the majority of the double-houses are saltbox-style with the rear slope of the roof extending further than the front and an attached shed across the back which was usually the kitchen. The sizeable lots, many with outhouses at the back along the alley, are about 130' x 85'. Other semi-detached houses are near the top of the hill on Highland Avenue and are the more common regional type with a standard gable roof and shed addition across the back. The uppermost street of houses in Leisenring No. 1 consists of ten single-family houses on cast-stone foundations. Built in 1917, they are three-bay, gable-end, single-story houses with a central brick chimney and shed roof over the central front doorway.

The coal company town Leisenring No. 1 was built by the Connellsville Coke and Iron Company, John Leisenring owner, to house the employees working at the Leisenring No. 1 mine, which was placed into operation in 1880. The original Leisenring tract had 8,500 acres which the company divided among three mines and towns; it was the largest single tract in the Connellsville coke region. Connellsville Coke and Iron constructed seventy-three double houses and the company store prior to 1890.

When the H. C. Frick Coke Company purchased the property in 1890 the mine had 2,704 acres of assigned coal and a 374'-deep shaft. After acquiring the entire Leisenring tract, the Frick Coke Company engaged the Trotter Water Company to supply water to quench the coke ovens and for domestic use in the towns. (Trotter obtained its water from the Youghiogheny River, north of Connellsville, and it was piped by gravity to the Leisenrings.) In 1899 the Frick Coke Company expanded Leisenring No. 1's housing stock, building ten double houses. In 1903 the company had 410 employees at the plant, 125 of whom were engaged in coke production. The plant produced more than 200,000 tons of coke in that year. The operation continued to grow and at its maximum had approximately 500 ovens. As the Leisenring No. 1 operation grew, more houses were added -- ten single houses in 1917 and three double houses in 1918. A frame recreation hall, bath house and swimming pool -- none of which remain today -- were also built between 1910 and 1911.

The economy of the entire Connellsville coke region, including Fayette County, was slow during the depression years in the 1930s, but World War II created a tremendous demand for coke to

fuel the steel mills. The Leisenrings benefited from this renewed demand, and their coke ovens operated at full capacity to ship about 500,000 tons of beehive coke in 1944, an output greater than that of the entire Connellsville coke region in the 1930s. During the war years, in fact, the Leisenring mines were the only ones in the region to export coal since they mined far more than their ovens' ability to handle.

Leisenring No. 1's mine and ovens closed in the early 1950s following the Korean War, and the town was sold to Cleveland realtor, John W. Galbreath, in 1950. Galbreath, in turn, sold the houses individually. In 1959 and 1960 the mine buildings and coke ovens were disassembled. Today, Leisenring No. 1 is one of Fayette County's largest former company towns.

Sources:

Connellsville Coal and Coke Region from Latrobe, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, to Fairchance, Fayette County, Pennsylvania. n.p. 1883. Map on file at the Fayette County Campus of Penn State University.

Enman, John Aubrey. "The Relationship of Coal Mining and Coke Making to the Distribution of Population Agglomerations in the Connellsville (Pennsylvania) Beehive Coke Region." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1962.

Ellis, Franklin. History of Fayette County, Pennsylvania. 2 Volumes. Philadelphia: L.H. Everts Company, 1882; reprint edition, Evansville, Indiana: Unigraphic Inc., 1977.

General Mine Map of the Leisenring No. 1 Mine, Dunbar Township, Fayette County, Pennsylvania, June 1928. Compiled by the Engineering Department of the H. C. Frick Coke Company, Scottdale Pennsylvania. Original on file in the Resource Management Office of the United States Steel Corporation, Uniontown, Pa.

Insurance Map Showing Surface Lines, Rights of Way, Buildings, Pipelines, Etc., at the Leisenring No. 1 Mine of the H. C. Frick Coke Company, Dunbar Township, Fayette County, Pennsylvania, October 1908. Original on file in the Resource Management Office of the United States Steel Corporation, Uniontown, Pa.

Map of Connellsville Coke Region and Adjacent Territory, Western Pennsylvania. n.p., ca. 1905 - 1913.

Map of the Connellsville Coke Region and Adjacent Fields. Uniontown: South Penn Engineering Company, 1913.

Map of the Connellsville Coke Region and Adjacent Fields.  
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Report of the Department of Mines of Pennsylvania: Bituminous  
Region, 1903. Harrisburg: William Stanley Ray, State  
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Topographical Map of the Connellsville Coke Region. H. C. Frick  
Coke Company 1892. Originals on file at the Resource  
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